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ABSTRACT

The MINK (Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, and Kansas) Network Educational Resources Center is a regional, collaborative effort among Teacher Corps Projects and a model of shared governance to improve learning environments and understanding among teacher educators. The governance of this group comes from a Board of Directors comprised of project directors from each of the active Teacher Corps Projects within the four-state area. These project directors are in a position to receive continual input from a variety of sources including colleagues at colleges and universities and practitioners at the project sites. This type of multi-faceted input enables the formulation of policy that reflects the functioning of the entire Network. The objectives of the MINK Network are: (1) to act as an educational resource center for materials developed by MINK Teacher Corps Projects as well as other educational materials relevant to the thrust of Teacher Corps; (2) to serve as a communication center among constituent projects for mutual sharing of information, product development, and evaluative analysis of educational materials; (3) to assist new projects through developmental stages by recommending resources, techniques, and materials; (4) to assist those associated or affected by Teacher Corps by sharing techniques, problems, and solutions at meetings; and (5) to coordinate liaisons with other resources outside the Network. This sharing of responsibilities and resources among institutions of higher education, local education agencies, and state education departments is reflected by a high degree of collectivity in the policies and purposes of participating Teacher Corps Projects. (Mh)

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Executive Secretary
Teacher Corps - MINK Network

The need for more effective and efficient education has been, for a large part, instrumental in the development of a model for shared governance. No longer may Institutions of Higher Education, Local Educational Agencies, or State Departments of Education operate in an autonomous fashion. There are forces surrounding these previously isolated learning environments that will no longer accept the status quo of the current governance model.

We need only to reflect upon the intense effort of classroom teachers to gain greater recognition and voice in all aspects of educational decision making. This effort has been evidenced in the increasing number of contract negotiations between representatives of classroom teachers and school boards. This indeed is a model of shared governance.

A somewhat different model of shared governance is that associated with Networks. Quite simply, a Network may be defined as an inter-connected or inter-related group. More specifically, the Network model to be discussed here originated with Teacher Corps.

Teacher Corps has recently celebrated its 10th Anniversary. Since its inception there have been significant changes in original goals and challenges. Although changes have been made, an original conviction held by the members of Teacher Corps still perminates these goals and objectives. This conviction was highlighted by Senator Edward M. Kennedy at a recent Teacher Corps Development Conference. He said, "If a good education is

SP010 590

the key to a better future for the disadvantaged child, than a good teacher is the key to that education...if we want those children to learn now, we must provide them with such teachers."

One major change recently incorporated by Teacher Corps, to achieve this goal, has been the funding of a system of cooperative arrangements among its projects within a programmatic and/or geographical area through the initiation of Networks. Here-to-fore, Teacher Corps Projects funded within the United States and its territories have operated in an autonomous fashion. Little was done, beyond chance occurence, to facilitate sharing of resources and experiences among those associated with Teacher Corps Projects.

The MINK Network is a collaborative effort among the Teacher Corps Projects located in Region VII, Office of Education, Department of Health Education and Welfare. Region VII includes the states of Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, and Kansas. By taking the first letter of each state the acronym MINK was created. The governance of this collaborative group comes from a Board of Directors. This Board is comprised of the Project Director from each active Teacher Corps Project within the four State area.

Figure 1 - illustrates, schematically, the physical composition of the MINK Network. As shown, the Board is currently composed of Teacher Corps Project Directors from seven Institutions of Higher Education. The solid lines indicate direct relationships, whereas the broken lines indicate an advisory relationship. State Departments of Instruction along with Region VII, USOE have named Teacher Corps Liaison Persons. These persons attend Board meetings and act in a resource capacity. They have no formal vote in decisions reflecting Network policy.

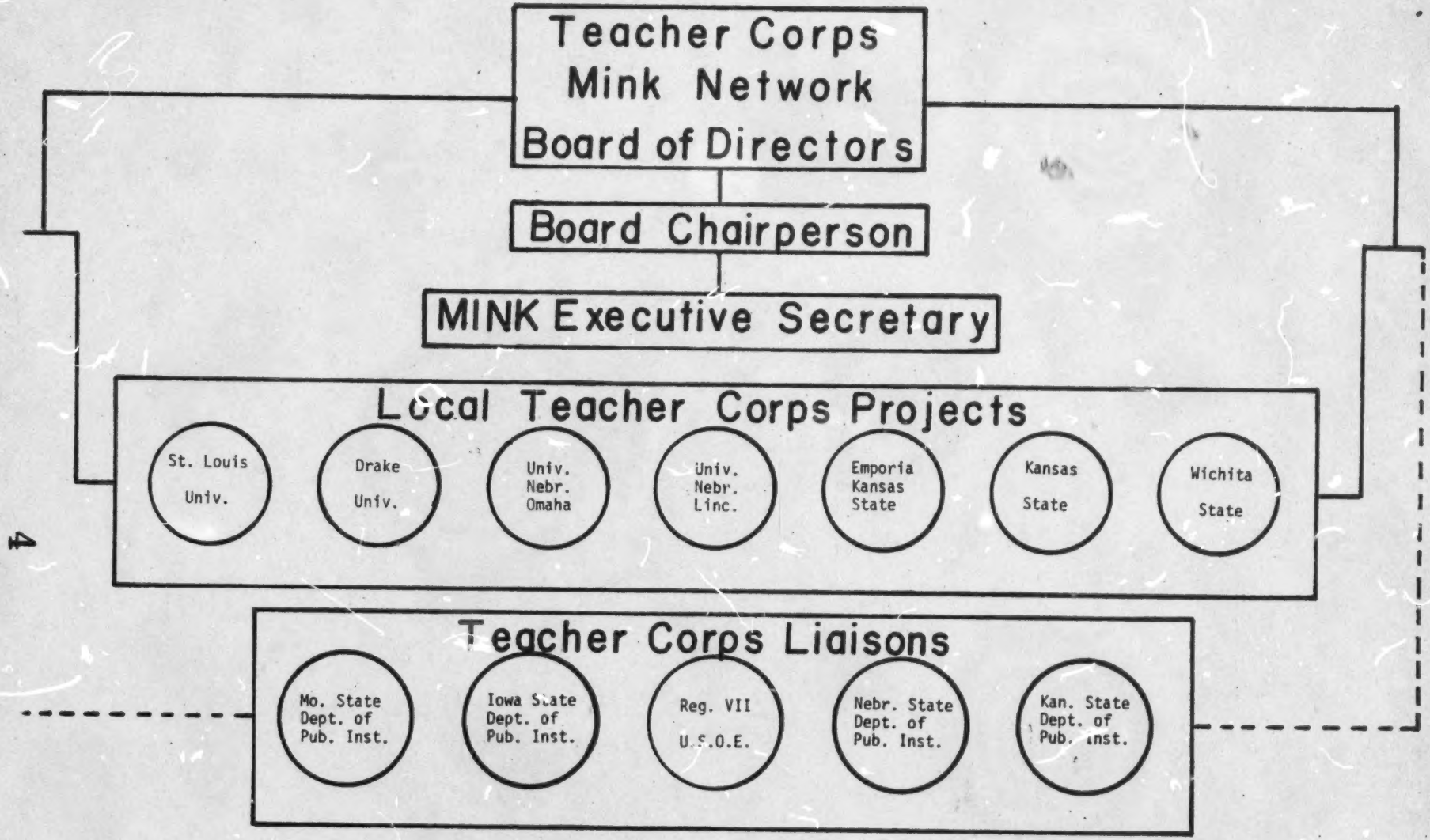
Teacher Corps
Mink Network
Board of Directors
Board Chairperson
MINK Executive Secretary
Local Teacher Corps Projects
St. Louis Univ.
Drake Univ.
Univ. Nebr. Omaha
Univ. Nebr. Linc.
Emporia Kansas State
Kansas State
Wichita State
Teacher Corps Liaisons
Mo. State Dept. of Pub. Inst.
Iowa State Dept. of Pub. Inst.
Reg. VII U.S.O.E.
Nebr. State Dept. of Pub. Inst.
Kan. State Dept. of Pub. Inst.

Fig. I

The Board of Directors, by concenses, select a chairperson who's functions are to conduct the formal Board meetings and to serve as spokesperson for the Board to the Executive Secretary regarding the operation of the Network. The Chairperson of the MINK Network Board of Directors may respond affirmatively to operational requests made by the Executive Secretary within the guidelines of the proposal.

If unable to respond in an affirmative manner, the Chairperson will obtain a consensus of opinion from the entire Board of Directors regarding the request made by the Executive Secretary. This unique arrangement provides the Executive Secretary with maximum lattitude in planning and leadership with a buffer for communication with the total Board of Directors.

The Project Directors of each local Teacher Corps Project receive input from a variety of sources. There are two primary sources providing this input. They are the Institution of Higher Education and the Local Educational Agency. Figure 2 - depicts some of the major input sources available to local Teacher Corps Projects from both the Institution of Higher Education and the local Educational Agency.

Project Directors are in continual contact with colleagues at the College or University level along with practitioners at the site of the Teacher Corps Project. This interaction among professionals engaged in a partnership designed for providing pre-service and in-service training to teachers allows for meaningful input into the governance of the Network.

As a result of this multifaceted input, the Network Board of Directors are able to formulate policies that in turn reflect the functioning of the Network.

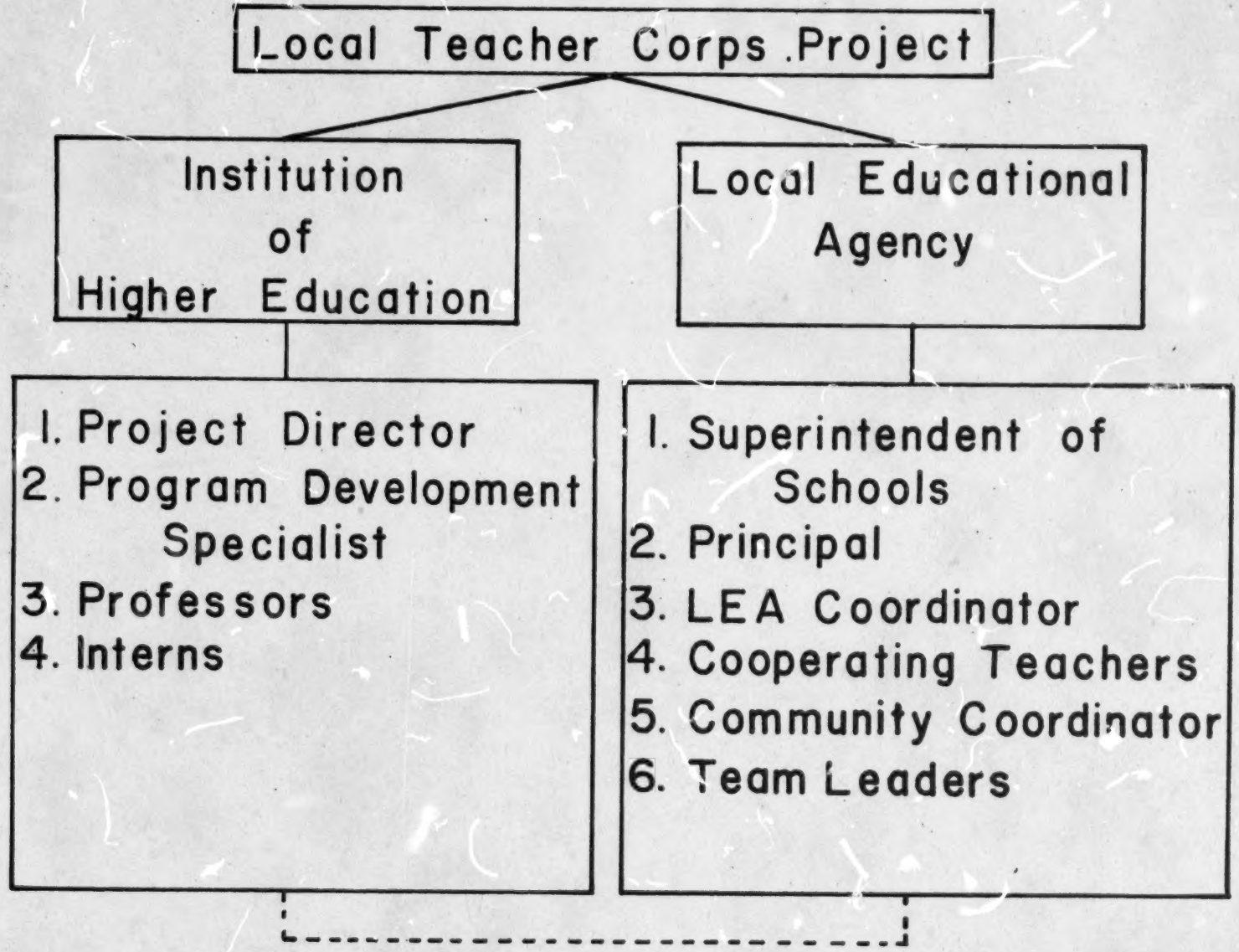
Local Teacher Corps Project
Institution of Higher Education
Local Educational Agency
1. Project Director
2. Program Development Specialist
3. Professors
4. Interns
1. Superintendent of Schools
2. Principal
3. LEA Coordinator
4. Cooperating Teachers
5. Community Coordinator
6. Team Leaders

Fig. 2

Teacher Corps Networks are still in the early stages of development. However, to date Networks as a whole have developed services in three primary areas. First, Networks have provided training assistance to Teacher Corps Projects within their boundaries. This training assistance includes a wide variety of workshops, program development methods, and installation of new training components.

Secondly, Networks have collected and disseminated information germane to the Projects located within their area. This service includes the gathering and writing of relevant, annotated bibliographies and the development of clearinghouse capability to capture and distribute Teacher Corps materials along with other pertinent educational substance.

Thirdly, Networks have provided an effective communication system among individual Teacher Corps Projects within the Network boundaries and between Teacher Corps/Washington and these Projects. Communication services have included the exchange of information about effective practices, materials, management and evaluation strategies. Since activities developed within Networks improve Project operations, they have implications for the whole Teacher Education program within a given geographical area.

The scope of activities for each Network is designed by the constituent projects within the geographical or programmatic boundaries. As a result of this, governance and purpose reflect the collective agreement of the participating projects.

The MINK Network has as its 1975-1976 purposes, the following objectives:

1. The Network will act as an Educational Resource Center for materials developed by MINK Teacher Corps Projects as well as other educational materials relevant to the thrust of Teacher Corps.

2. The Network will serve as a Communication Center among constituent projects for mutual sharing of information, instructional product development and evaluative analysis of educational materials.
3. The Network will assist new and existing projects through varying stages of development by recommending resources, techniques and materials. Many of these resources, techniques and materials will obviously reside within the Network.
4. The Network will facilitate pre-service and in-service meetings to assist those associated with or affected by Teacher Corps to share techniques, problems and solutions.
5. The Network will coordinate the liaisons with other resources outside the perimeter of the Network, thus establishing and encouraging relationships with other organizations that would benefit and enhance the operating of the Network.

From these objectives you can ascertain that the cooperative venture, among these specialized Teacher Training Projects, has resulted in the construction of a communication link. This link reflects input from sources that should be instrumental in developing teacher training programs, both pre-service and in-service.

As a result of Networks, a feedback loop has been established that facilitates the objectives of many different groups interested in better meeting the needs of pupils found in schools today. This feedback loop comes from the interaction as a result of the overlapping denoted in Figure 3. The sharing of both responsibilities and resources among these three groups will culminate in improved learning environments and understanding on the part of those involved in Teacher Education, both pre-service and in-service.

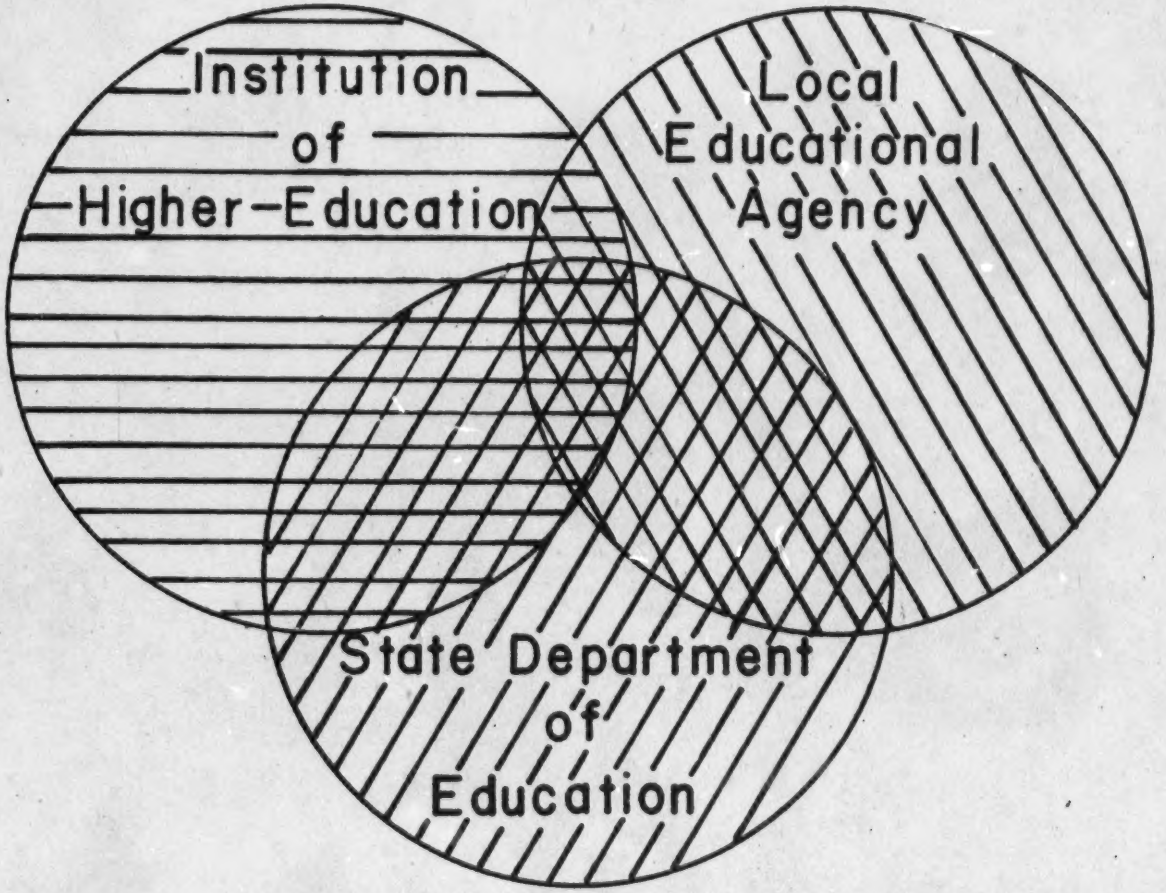
Institution
of
Higher-Education
Local
Educational
Agency
State Department
of
Education

Fig. 3

Networking within the limited scope of those Institutions of Higher Education with active Teacher Corps Projects is but a prelude of future endeavors that could reflect meaningful experiences in education. With limited funds for individual Institutions of Higher Education or Local Educational Agencies to develop teacher training pre-service and in-service, sharing among these groups becomes critical.

This sharing could be reflected in both human resources and materialistic concerns. Along with sharing, additional communication links could be developed among the institutions preparing teachers, those certifying them, and school districts employing said teachers. Slightly different models for governance are bound to emerge; however, it is felt that much can be gained from the model currently being utilized by the Teacher Corps MINK Network.